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## BOOK REVIEWS

### METHODS AND PRINCIPLES

*The Mythology of All Races*: vol. XII. *Egyptian*, W. MAX MÜLLER; *Indo-Chinese*, Sir JAMES GEORGE SCOTT. Marshall Jones Co., Boston 1918. xiv, 450 pp.

In this last text-volume of Dr. Gray's valuable series, Egyptian mythology occupies pp. 1-245 and Indo-Chinese the rest of the volume. In pp. 432-450, the editor furnishes a bibliography that on the Egyptian side makes no claim to completeness but contains all the necessary material. The bibliography of Indo-Chinese mythology is very short, but doubtless exhaustive.

It seems best to begin with a discussion of the latter part of the volume because little more can be said about it than a statement of its contents. Sir James Scott speaks of the peoples and religions of Indo-China, their myths and legends, their festivals and finally of the thirty-seven *Nats*, who, it seems, are only thirty-four. It is not pretended that the mythology of Burma and Tonkin is influential or important. On the contrary, the author points out frequently that the material of these stories is often derivative and the conceptions involved puerile. But he has put together a number of interesting facts, recondite because little known, and valuable for purposes of comparison. And he has furnished his account with nineteen large plates, most of them highly colored, which tell almost as much as any text could do of the nature and character of these curious spirits, called *Nats*. The colored plates are all taken from Temple, *Thirty-Seven Nats of Burma*, a book on which this account largely depends.

Much the more valuable portion of the volume is the brief examination of Egyptian mythology by Professor W. Max Müller. Professor Müller is one of the two most distinguished Egyptologists in America. He writes with the fullest and most direct acquaintance with the sources and presents the mature result of thorough research and long reflection on all phases of the life of ancient Egypt. It would be difficult to overrate his equipment or competence. And, in spite of its short compass, his presentation is one of the best that have ever been published.

As a matter of fact, it is much more than an account of Egyptian mythology. It is a highly significant and suggestive study of Egyptian

religion. That was inevitable from the nature of Egyptian mythology. Greek mythology, in the form we generally know, is largely the result of direct and often determinable poetic creation, quite irresponsible and only loosely associated with religious thinking and acts. Not so Egyptian myths. We know them largely from liturgies, and from the figures and cult-actions that they are meant to explain. That is, they form an integral part of Egyptian religious activity and cannot be dissociated from it.

In one other respect, the study of Egyptian mythology is a different thing from the Greek mythology, which is much better known and almost immediately comes to our minds first when the word mythology is mentioned. The Greek stories are concerned with persons who have a definite individuality even for us. That individuality is somewhat deceptive. It is due to an artificial selection on the part of later grammarians and mythographers who have suppressed contradictions and provided continuity and sequence where those elements were lacking. Closer study reveals a confusion of forms and functions that are usual in polytheism, but any examination of Greek mythology has the inestimable advantage of proceeding from a "textus receptus" to which it is possible to attach variants.

In the Egyptian myths, on the other hand, there is no such established basis of comparison. The functions of one god are assimilated with extraordinary readiness to those of another, in cult, or prayer or legend, so that, in most cases, it is in the highest degree difficult to establish definite lineaments for any one of them. It is only in the case of the Osirian cycle, very fully discussed in Chapters v and vi, (pp. 92-128), that we seem able to detach marked personalities from the mass of confused detail that is presented in most accounts, and, we may suspect, that this fact is due to causes similar to those that have given Greek myths their apparent cohesion.

This lack of definite personalities, this confusion of details and functions, was taken to be an indication of the essentially pantheistic nature of Egyptian religion. Many of the scholars who held this view were quite unconsciously animated by the century-old awe with which western Europe had regarded the mysterious divinities of the Nile. Especially when the Rosetta stone seemed to furnish the key to the long locked inscriptions, imaginative men were certain that the rending of the veil of Isis would disclose a new insight into the universe. Quite naturally they found what they expected to find. Even first-rate investigators were prone to attach a philosophic depth and universal meaning to the

stories they unrolled from the papyri and this fact, together with the tendency of men to over-estimate the value of the subject matter with which they habitually deal, gave a fundamentally wrong conception of Egyptian spiritual life.

Against this view, there was soon advanced the other one—which might be termed that of common-sense—that Egyptian myths were precisely what they seemed to be, that the stories were crude because the ideas which they expressed were crude, and that so far from representing a profound and philosophic pantheism, they were the natural expressions of a primitive animism ossified into something like a system by sacerdotal tradition. That was the position of Maspero and it is whole-heartedly urged by Professor Müller. The argument is clearly stated, and, to my mind, quite cogently.

But the book is in no sense argumentative or polemical. There is a deal of matter given, so much, in fact, that one of the important functions of the series, that of furnishing material for reference and comparison, is admirably preserved. This is done, not merely in words, but largely by the many illustrations from the monuments—a procedure practically unavoidable in any study of Egyptian mythology. There are further a few typical texts, and an alphabetical list of the gods outside of the Osirian cycle.

The author then deals in an authoritative way with the difficult theoretical questions involved in the worship of animals, in magic and in Egyptian conceptions of the future life. The last chapter discusses the development and propagation of the Egyptian religion.

More than sixty pages of notes, which themselves often contain additional material of high value, close Professor Müller's book.

The value of the book in contents and methods has been sufficiently indicated. It is for that reason unfortunate that certain mechanical defects make it hard to use. There is in the first place no index, not even the briefest one. This, for a book which offers so much, is a serious omission. No doubt, in a work of this nature, the preparation of a complete index was very difficult, but an indifferent or incomplete index is still much better than none at all. Further the notes are made difficult to consult for lack of the simplest of all devices, *viz.*, some indication at the top of the page of the chapter to which they belong or the page on which the annotated passage appears.

There are small points at which issue might be taken, less with Professor Müller's statements than with the unqualified form in which they are made. The official etymology of Sarapis may well have been

Osor-hap (p. 386, no. 19), but the balance of probability is still in favor of his Sinopean origin. Nor does it seem to me proper to say that the "Isiac mysteries" exercised less influence on the classical mind than did those of Cybele or Mithra (p. 121). It is easy to exaggerate the depth to which Mithraism penetrated ancient society, in spite of Renan's dictum. Isis, denationalized somewhat and syncretized into unrecognizability, but still retaining much of her Egyptian external attributes, was a real competitor of Christianity, as Professor Müller admits (p. 242). One might add to the references he gives the famous passage of Apuleius, *Met.* XIII, i-vi, and such Greek papyri as that of Oxyrhyncus (Ox. Pap. XI, 1380).

It is to be hoped that this short treatise is the forerunner of a fuller systematic account of Egyptian religion and mythology.

MAX RADIN

### AMERICA

*Kutenai Tales.* FRANZ BOAS. Together with texts collected by ALEXANDER FRANCIS CHAMBERLAIN. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 59, Washington, 1918.

Like most of Professor Boas's work, this volume contains far more than it seems to at first sight. There are nearly three hundred pages of mythology given in both Kutenai and English. Part of this is in interlineated text plus accompanying free translation in English. The larger half of the collection is in solid text, with the translation at once literal enough to be of service to the linguist and sufficiently idiomatic in English to be readable and of ready use to the mythological student. The inconspicuous indication in the English translation of the lines of the Indian makes possible a very close correspondence between the two versions for those who are interested, without disconcerting the reader who cares only about the substance of the story.

Thirty pages of abstracts and comparative notes set a new example for work of this kind. It has long been customary to accompany collections of Indian tales by summaries. Very often however these summaries have been of undue length. Then, comparative references have usually been appended to the tales themselves, instead of the summaries. Dr. Boas's abstracts are unusually compact. They gain farther by having the several versions of the same myth brought together, instead of following the accidental order of their presentation. The comparative references are added as footnotes to the abstracts, where of course they properly belong. They are very full, perhaps vir-